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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 008261

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: INDIA UNCERTAIN ABOUT ITS NICHE IN IRAQI ELECTIONS

REF: STATE 274965

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt, Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

1. (C) Summary: MEA Joint Secretary (Americas) S. Jaishankar reiterated GOI desire to assist in Iraq's elections, but expressed uncertainty about India's role in light of their own political constraints in a meeting with PolCouns and Pol-MilOff on December 29. Regarding the proposed role of the International Mission for Iraq Elections (IMIE), he was uncertain that was the niche India should fill and was concerned that some of the other states involved in the IMIE (especially Canada) did not share India's sympathetic view of US efforts in Iraq. He promised to raise the issue with Foreign Secretary Saran upon Saran's return from Pakistan. End Summary.

2. (C) Jaishankar (who has played a leading role on Iraqi elections as part of his Americas portfolio) indicated that India was concerned about tying its role in Iraq to that of other governments. In this context, he noted considerable skepticism about the January elections during New Delhi's consultations in Ottawa recently, commenting that India found itself in the ironic role of "defending the US position" to Ottawa.

3. (C) He went on to reiterate the GOI's strong desire to play a useful role in the elections in a manner that their domestic constituency would support in the aftermath of the kidnapping of three Indian truck drivers in Iraq in the summer. He also expressed frustration that there has been no UN response to India's previous proposals for assisting in the elections, lamenting that "our proposals are being sat on in New York."

4. (C) Regarding PolCouns' description of the role of the IMIE to observe the polling process from Jordan (reftel), however, Jaishankar was doubtful that India would participate, saying, "We're not sure that is the niche we should be filling." "We're looking for middle ground between what is acceptable here and what is realistic and useful there," he added. He promised to raise the issue with FS Saran upon Saran's return from travel, and reiterated India's intention to re-engage in Iraq.

5. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
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